The prices fluctuate depending upon the quality of the product, market behaviour and demand from the mill sector. In order to ensure remunerative prices to the cotton farmers, minimum support prices (MSPs) for different varieties are fixed by the Government and Public Sector Agencies viz. Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) and NAFEO undertake procurement operations to ensure that the farmers do not resort to distress sale.

(e) The import of raw cotton is already under open general license w.e.f. 19-4-1994. A10 per cent import duty is levied on the import of raw cotton to discourage import of subsidized cotton from other countries. The import of cotton has fallen from 22.13 lakh bales in 2000-01 to 12 lakh bales in 2004-05.

Encouraging youth for farming

13. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is a sharp decline in the agriculture sector;

(b) if so, the details thereof, alongwith the drop in the quantum of agricultural produce and the imports made for making up the shortfall;

(c) whether this is attributed to the exodus of farmers in large scale from villages to cities and towns in search of alternative source of living;

(d) if so, the details thereof during the last three years, year-wise and State-wise; and

(e) the steps proposed to be taken to reverse the trend and encourage youth to take up farming?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) and (b) According to the advance estimates released by Central Statistical Organisation, the growth rate in the agriculture sector including the allied sectors of forestry, logging and fishing is 2.3 percent in the year 2005-06 as against 0.7 percent in the year 2004-05 at 1999-2000 prices. The estimated annual growth rates of agriculture including the allied sectors of forestry and fishing from 2001-02 to 2005-06 are given below:

Annual growth rate of GDP at 1999-2000 prices In Agriculture, Forestry, Logging and Fishing

Year	Growth rates in agriculture, forestry and fishing
2001-02	6.2
2002-03	-6.9
2003-04	10.0
2004-05	0.7
2005-06	2.3

The year-wise details of foodgrain production and imports thereof during the period 2001-02 to 2004-05 are given below:

(in Million tonnes)

Year	Foodg rains production	Import of foodgrains
2001-02	212.85	2.26
2002-03	174.77	2.85
2003-04	213.46	1.76
2004-05	204.61	1.35

Source: 1) Ministry of Agriculture

2) Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics, Ministry of Commerce.

(c) The growth in agriculture sector is mainly affected by the rainfall and other weather conditions since about 60% of the net sown area is rainfed.

(d) Does not arise.

(e) The Government has taken number of initiatives to address several issues concerning the agricultural sector. A series of policy initiatives has been taken in vital areas like credit, irrigation facilities, crop diversification, marketing infrastructure, horticulture and extension services. Efforts are on to enhance production and productivity and to encourage farming as a remunerative profession. This process is further strengthened through farm mechanization, agri-clinics and agri-business centres and extension services.